Reply (Argument)

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5. Reply

The invention of the present application is clearly different from the cited invention, and even a person skilled in the art cannot easily arrive at the claimed invention based on the cited invention. We believe that the present invention is patentable. In the following we will explain the reason.

(1)Invention According to Claim

Claim 1 and Claim 6, which are the independent claims of the present invention, are defined as below.

[Claim 1]

An indoor unit (2) of an air conditioner (1), comprising:

a casing (4) in which at least a specific part (240, 241) is formed from a transparent material in which luminous grains (45, 48) have been admixed; and

a design layer (43, 46) that exhibits a color scheme or a pattern and that is provided to the reverse side of said specific part (240, 241).

[Claim 6]

A method for manufacturing an indoor unit (2) of an air conditioner (1), comprising:

a first step (S14, 16) wherein at least a specific part (240, 241) of a casing (4) is formed from a transparent material in which luminous grains (45, 48) have been admixed; and

a second step (S15, 17) wherein a design layer (43, 46) that exhibits a color scheme or a pattern is formed on the reverse side of said specific part (240, 241).

(2)Comparison between the inventions according to Claims of the Present Invention and the invention according to the cited document

The cited document 1 (JP2003-014249) discloses an indoor unit provided with an inlet panel. The inlet panel is disposed in front of a front panel provided with an inlet. The inlet panel is a panel that closes and opens the inlet. At a start of operation of the indoor unit, the inlet panel rotates and opens the inlet. At shutdown of the indoor unit, the inlet panel rotates reversely and closes the inlet.

It is described that this inlet panel is capable of improving the appearance of the indoor unit by providing an auxiliary plate. It is also described that the auxiliary plate may be either a two-piece member or a one piece member. When it is a two-piece member, to the reverse side of the first layer is provided with a second layer made of, for example, a thin metallic film. Light transmits through the first layer and the transmitted light reflects on the second layer. In addition, it is described that the second layer may be colored with a specific color. These matters are included in the descriptions of the "transparent material" and the "design layer" of the present invention.

In the cited document 1, however, there is no description concerning mixing of luminous grain. The Examiner states, in the International Search Opinion, this matter can be easily derived from the description concerning the one piece member in the cited document 1. It is described in the cited document 1 that the auxiliary plate of a one piece member can have various patterns and colors. Examiner may have been led to believe that mixing of luminous grains is derivable from the above-mentioned descriptions.

However, we sincerely doubt that "the auxiliary plate of a one piece member can have various patterns and colors" could suggest mixing grains. The reason is as follows.

The advantage of mixing luminous grains as described in the present invention has two effects: adding luminance to the design layer on the reverse side, and, in turn, omitting a step for adding another layer. With a conventional indoor unit of an air conditioner, the number of steps increases when trying to achieve the former effect, while luminance cannot be added to the design layer on the reverse side when trying to achieve the latter effect. The present invention is capable of achieving these two conflicting effects at the same time. Here, trying to achieve the former effect inevitably requires the design layer on the reverse side to be visible externally.

Also, in order to achieve the latter effect, what is necessary is not providing a layer of grains but "mixing grains into a transparent material."

On the other hand, as for the "one piece member" described in the cited document 1, we believe that the auxiliary plate itself has patterns and colors. In the case of the one piece member, a design layer is not provided to the reverse side, as it is clear from the distinction made between the one piece member and the two-piece member. Also, because of this, we believe that forming the one piece member from a transparent material is unlikely in this case. It is because if the auxiliary plate was formed from a transparent material when a design layer was not provided, the reverse side of the auxiliary plate without a design layer would be exposed externally.

As mentioned above, according to the present invention, the important point is that grains are mixed into a transparent material. Therefore, if the one piece material was not transparent, mixing grains would be meaningless. Accordingly, the above description concerning a one piece member does not suggest mixing luminous grains.

Also, as for the "two-piece member," there is no description concerning mixing luminous grains into the first layer in the cited document 1. It simply describes applying a color scheme to the second layer. The cited reference describes exhibiting a design by providing a different layer. This is what we refer to as a conventional art of the present invention. It is against the object of the present application, as the object of the present invention is to reduce the number of manufacturing steps that is increased due to providing a different layer.

(3)Conclusion

As discussed above, the present invention cannot be easily obtained based on the cited document 1. Therefore, we urge you to reconsider the patentability of the claimed invention.